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consigned to an early grave. Discussion of every kind, history, eloquence, chooses prose. It is impossible that poetry, constricted as it is by metre, should give us the completeness of a prose picture. Macaulay understands this; Prescott and Irving know this; and we may, without much exposure to error, venture to predict, that poetry has seen its best days, and must be content henceforth to retreat behind sober, simple, manly, and energetic prose.

If there is any foundation in these remarks, then does it follow, that the efforts of Mr. Gilfillan to turn all the Bible into poetry are as useless as they are destitute of taste and of truth. If any thinking man wishes to put to the test the allegations that we have just made in respect to poetry, he can come at once to a just conclusion by asking the single question: What would the four Gospels be to the great world of men, if they were reduced to epic and heroic hexameters? The very thought is a degradation of them.

Mr. Gilfillan will doubtless set us down as æsthetical heretics, and regard us as destitute of taste. But we appeal from his decision to that tribunal of common sense and simple taste which is occupied by all sober and enlightened men. And if such an appeal be allowed, we have nothing to fear as to the issue of the cause which we have espoused.

ART. XII. — CRITICAL NOTICES.

1. — *Lectures on the History of Rome, from the Earliest Times to the Fall of the Roman Empire.* By B. G. NIEBUHR. Edited by DR. LEONHARD SCHMITZ, F. R. S. E., Rector of the High School of Edinburgh. Second Edition, with every Addition derivable from Dr. Isler's German Edition. London: Taylor, Walton, & Maberley. 1849. 3 vols. 8vo.

NIEBUHR lectured on Roman history in the University of Bonn for three years, ending in the summer of 1829. The latest edition of his published History, which had the benefit of revision by himself, appeared in 1827. As his mind was ever active, and he was constantly engaged in collecting new materials to illustrate

his subject, scholars have much reason to regret that he lectured extemporaneously or without notes ; for the consequence is, that not a fragment of these lectures, which doubtless contained much that was novel and interesting, remains to us in his own hand. Niebuhr was one of the very few who are worthy of having even the *disjecta membra* of their discourse carefully preserved ; the mere drippings of his overflowing mind were of more worth than the painfully amassed fruits of the researches and reflections of other persons. Besides, in some respects, these Lectures, if he had written them out, would have had even greater value than his published History. Like most other Germans, he lacked the constructive talent of bookmaking. When he wrote deliberately for the public, his style was obscure, longwinded, and confused, and his conclusions were buried under a heap of ill-digested premises. His great work is rather a series of erudite disquisitions on the sources of Roman history, and a critical analysis of materials, than an orderly and perspicuous narrative. He was oppressed by the extent of his subject, and the reader finds himself at the end of the last volume before he is conscious of having fully entered upon the main discussion of the theme. His work, therefore, is one that scholars will make golden use of, while it must ever remain caviare to the general reader. Yet in familiar speech, whether in conversation or the lecture room, Niebuhr could be precise, pointed, and perspicuous ; witness his Conversations as reported by Dr. Lieber. Had we the *ipsissima verba* in which he discoursed to his pupils in the University, we should probably have not only a fuller and more instructive, but a more intelligible and well-digested, account of Roman history than we find in his published works. But the winged words have flown forever.

Happily, however, it is the custom of German students to take very copious notes of the lectures which they attend at the universities. Niebuhr's instruction was so much prized, that it was the aim of those who were present in his classes to carry away as perfect a transcript as possible of what he said. Many of these notes having been preserved, it occurred to Dr. Schmitz, who was himself one of the hearers, to obtain as many of the manuscripts as he could collect, and by collating them with his own, to make out and publish a tolerably perfect report of the lectures. He carried this scheme into effect for a series of the lectures embracing the history of Rome from the first Punic war to the death of Constantine ; and the publication was received with so much favor, being immediately translated into German, that a son of the historian in Germany, with some classical friends, undertook to get together a series of manuscript notes of all the lectures, and to publish them as a continuous and independent

work on the history of Rome. The whole were accordingly printed, under the editorial care of Dr. Isler. Dr. Schmitz forthwith translated the work into English, made large additions to it from manuscripts in his own possession, and the result is before us in three handsomely executed volumes. They are doubly valuable, as a summary of the historian's latest opinions and most matured studies, and as containing a sketch of that large portion of Roman history not comprised in the great work published during the author's lifetime.

Their full value depends very much, of course, on the completeness of the notes, and on the care with which they have been collated, revised, and published. The undertaking was a difficult one, for we do not understand that the writers of the notes even professed to keep a full record of all that the lecturer said; and, indeed, they could not have done so without the aid of stenography. The work is to be read with caution, therefore, and it can be determined only from internal evidence how far Niebuhr is responsible for its contents. Both Dr. Schmitz and the German editors appear to have considered it their duty to follow the manuscript notes very faithfully, attributing more importance to the preservation of Niebuhr's own words, than to the verification of the statements imputed to him. We have not examined the work enough to judge of the success with which they have executed their difficult task; but we have found in it enough to be able to recommend it strongly, not only to the professed students of Roman history, but to all who are able to follow the course of independent and philosophical investigation and reflection. Niebuhr was a rare instance among German scholars of the union of profound and varied erudition with great vigor and richness of thought. Vast as his learning was, he mastered it, and was not mastered by it. He did not waste his strength on insignificant details, and he was able to classify and use his acquisitions with a due regard to their relative importance. The critical judgments of such a man are of high value. We like to get his impressions of books and authors, both ancient and modern; and fortunately, as he lectured in an easy and rather discursive manner, wishing to direct the private reading of the students, we can glean from these volumes much more valuable matter than is directly indicated by their title. His more elaborate views of the characters and lives of distinguished Romans are also full of entertainment and instruction. The reader may not go along with him in all his judgments; but he cannot fail to admire the freedom of opinion which is manifested, and the ease with which all the facts of history are grouped around the theme to illustrate and defend the views which are taken.